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ABSTRACT

The Ontario College of Teachers licenses, governs, and regulates teaching practice. Its mandate includes providing leadership in developing standards of practice. This paper examines the mandate of the Standards of Practice and Education Committee and work of the staff in the Standards of Practice and Education Unit. After describing development of the Standards, the paper details key elements in commitment to students and lifelong learning: demonstration of care and commitment, support for student learning, equitable and respectful treatment, growing as individuals and contributing members of society, and assistance in becoming lifelong learners. Key elements of professional knowledge are noted: knowledge of the student, the curriculum, teaching practice, and the learning environment. Key elements of teaching practice include: the student, curriculum, teaching and the changing context of learning environments, student assessment and evaluation, and reflection. Key elements of leadership and community are: responsibility and service, creating learning communities, and sustaining learning through innovation and change. Key elements of ongoing professional learning are: teacher and student learning, professional growth, and improving practice. The paper discusses ethical standards, implementation (professional learning framework), ongoing professional learning, accreditation of preservice programs, standards of practice in investigations and hearings, and current validation strategies. (Contains 53 references.) (SM)

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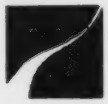

Ontario College of Teachers
Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario

Ontario College of Teachers: Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession

Mary Marrin, Linda R. Grant, Gary Adamson,
Allan Craig and Frances A. Squire

Paper presented at the
International Conference on New Professionalism in Teaching:
Teacher Education and Teacher Development in a Changing World
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Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession

MARY MARRIN, LINDA R. GRANT, GARY ADAMSON, ALLAN CRAIG, and FRANCES A. SQUIRE

OVERVIEW OF THE PAPER

The Ontario College of Teachers was founded in 1996 to license, govern and regulate – in the public interest – the practice of teaching. An important part of the mandate of the College is to provide leadership to the profession in developing standards of practice for the profession. This paper will focus on the mandate of the Standards of Practice and Education Committee and the work of staff in the Standards of Practice and Education Unit. The paper was written collaboratively by the staff of the Unit and describes the developmental process, the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession, and the implementation activities currently underway.

A self-regulatory body must be able to articulate what it is that makes that professional body unique. For the Ontario College of Teachers, it means answering the question "What does it mean to be a teacher?" Professional self-regulatory bodies use the term "standards of practice" to refer to the descriptors that answer this question. In the case of teaching, this description includes statements about commitment to students and student learning, professional knowledge, teaching practice, leadership and community, and ongoing professional learning.

Validation strategies are now being planned by staff in partnership with school boards, staff development consortia, faculties, teacher federations, principals and groups of teacher-researchers to work with the standards in practice. The College wants to understand how the standards relate to the professional learning requirements of educators in different roles. More importantly, the College wants to see if educators can see images of themselves within the standards of practice and if they can use the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* as a foundation for their professional learning.

Publication and widespread distribution of the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* document should promote new and renewed professionalism both in the public perception of the teaching profession and in the professional practice of members of the Ontario College of Teachers.

Introduction

The Ontario College of Teachers

The Ontario College of Teachers was founded in 1996 to license, govern and regulate — in the public interest — the practice of teaching. The College brings to the teaching profession full professional recognition and status. The 171,500 members of the College include classroom teachers in publicly-funded and private schools, school administrators, superintendents, as well as Ministry of Education and Training staff, faculty of education and community college staff and many others, including staff at the Ontario College of Teachers, who hold qualifications to teach in Ontario. Anyone who is employed in a publicly-funded system and requires a teaching

certificate to be in that position must be a member in good standing of the College. "Teacher" is defined in the *Education Act* as a member of the Ontario College of Teachers.

The Mandate: Develop Standards of Practice

An important part of the College's mandate is to provide leadership to the profession in establishing standards of practice for the profession and a framework for career-long learning.

The Professional Affairs Department of the College supports the work of two standing committees, the Standards of Practice and Education Committee and the Accreditation Committee. The mandate of these committees highlights four key responsibilities. These include:

- developing and refining standards of practice and ethical standards for the profession;
- developing and implementing a framework for the ongoing professional learning of the College membership;
- accrediting programs and registering program providers for pre-service and in-service learning; and
- valuing the professional learning of College members.

This paper will focus on the mandate of the Standards of Practice and Education Committee and the work of staff in the Standards of Practice and Education Unit.

The Purpose of "Standards of Practice"

Definition of "Standards of Practice"

A self-regulatory body must be able to articulate what it is that makes that professional body unique. For the Ontario College of Teachers, it means answering the question "What does it mean to be a teacher?" Professional self-regulatory bodies use the term "standards of practice" to refer to the descriptors that answer this question. In the case of teaching, this description includes statements about commitment to students and student learning, professional knowledge, teaching practice, leadership and community, and ongoing professional learning.

The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* has been developed to serve a range of purposes. The standards of practice will:

- focus on the responsibility of the teaching profession to enhance student learning;
- provide a common understanding of what makes "being a teacher" a unique professional experience;
- clarify the knowledge, skills and values implicit in the practice of teaching;
- provide the basis for ongoing personal and professional growth and the accreditation of professional learning programs;
- represent the aspirations and goals of the teaching profession;
- enhance the dignity of the teaching profession;
- acknowledge the contribution the teaching profession makes to Ontario society; and
- assist the College in fulfilling its mandate to govern the practice of teaching in the public interest.

The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* provides the foundation for professional learning programs accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers. In the accreditation process, program providers are required to demonstrate that their program is indeed based on the standards of practice, that the program addresses the range of expectations implicit in the standards, and that the program supports an integrated approach to enhancing the standards of practice for the teaching profession.

The standards are not intended to be the criteria for the ongoing performance appraisal of individual members of the College. Responsibility for performance appraisal rests with the employer.

The Development of the Standards

Rationale for the Developmental Design

The development of the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* began in a context of widely varying expectations coupled with apprehension and mistrust. Some members of faculties of education felt that the universities were better able to establish standards. Some members of the public had expectations that the College would set performance standards in order to weed out incompetent teachers. The teachers' federations vocally opposed the establishment of the College: rumours of standards, inspections and investigations abounded. The developmental design was planned to establish the credibility of the College by using sound research methods and by involving members of the College and of the public in the process. The simultaneous development of the Professional Learning Framework, also using

broad consultation and qualitative research methods, has strengthened the engagement of members of the College and the public.

Public education in Ontario is delivered in English, French and Native languages. All aspects of the research are being conducted in English and in French and include representation from the Native education community.

The College is committed to developing a document that is grounded in national and international research while reflecting beliefs and values expressed by the Ontario public and by the profession, that is, the members of the Ontario College of Teachers.

The Unfolding of the Project

Work on the development of the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* began with the arrival of the first College staff in the Standards of Practice and Education Unit in the spring of 1997.

The first stage of the project was to study examples of standards from other educational jurisdictions. Several examples of standards from English-speaking jurisdictions were available. Staff examined very closely the standards from different states in Australia. American examples included the standards of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as well as several examples from state education departments. The standards of the Teacher Training Agency in the United Kingdom and the *Teacher Competences* of the General Teaching Council of Scotland were studied. The French-language search yielded "orientations",

"principles", and "objectives" for teacher pre-service and in-service training programs in the provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick, in Switzerland and in France.

A search of the Internet resulted in examples of standards and teacher training information from many jurisdictions around the world. The *Standards on Teaching Profession* of the Teachers' Council of Thailand, the *Relationship with Students* of the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union and information on teacher training programs in several jurisdictions in South-East Asia including Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong were also examined. Whether statements of standards or descriptions of teacher training programs, all provided rich data on the knowledge, skills, attributes and values expected of members of the teaching profession.

Standards of practice statements from other self-regulatory bodies in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada were also studied. These included the standards of practice for health care professionals, pharmacists and social workers.

From this study of the literature, seven themes for discussion were identified:

- Commitment to Student Learning
- Required Professional Knowledge
- Facilitating Effective Learning
- Assessing and Reporting for Improvement
- Professional Learning
- Creating a Learning Community
- Leadership.

Several methods were used to identify participants for the structured development process. Provincial educational organizations representing teachers, principals and superintendents were contacted and invited to participate. The faculties of education involved in accreditation were asked to recommend participants. Some educators who had applied for external positions on College subcommittees were contacted and invited to be part of focus groups or to identify participants in their local areas. The five College subcommittees of the Standards of Practice and Education Committee, Pre-service Subcommittee, Supervisory Officer's Qualifications Program Subcommittee, Principal's Qualifications Program Subcommittee, Ongoing Professional Learning (Action Research) Subcommittee, and Professional Learning Framework Subcommittee worked with staff to identify appropriate focus groups and potential participants. A particular effort was made to include members of the College in different roles and in different workplaces.

In addition, parents, students, trustees and members of the public were invited to participate. Equally important was the need to include participants from the different geographic areas in Ontario and representing the English-language, French-language and Native school systems.

All participants completed a data profile. The population sample was analyzed from a variety of perspectives:

- present role of participants;
- educational employer;
- geographic distribution in Ontario;
- workplace language (English, French, Native); and

- gender.

Project goals for sampling and the collection of data for this early research on the development and writing of the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* were: first, to obtain data from members of the College and the public and to involve them in the development process; second, to obtain data from throughout Ontario; and, third, to work as much as possible through the subcommittee structure of the College.

All three objectives were achieved. Between December 8, 1997 and June 3, 1998, a sample total of 21 focus groups, 2 writing teams, 2 formal discussion groups, 24 telephone interviews and numerous individual consultations were conducted. Participants were members of the College and the public and were from different areas of the province. College members represented all of the publicly-funded school systems, faculties of education, and independent schools. Participants had a wide variety of role experiences and areas of expertise.

The development process and the data collection led to a number of positive outcomes. These included:

- high quality data;
- data that was a reflection of the profession;
- a focus group process that modeled professionalism and profiled the College;
- the development of new relationships with College members and the public; and
- the establishment of a data base for future research.

Hundreds of members of the College and the public contributed through structured research activities to the development of the first draft of the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*. In addition to the structured research activities, questions were posted on the College web-site and in College publications. Many participants offered feedback through e-mail, discussion groups, writing teams and written correspondence. All of the data was subjected to qualitative analysis. For example, the interviews, discussion groups and focus groups were audio-taped. Pairs of program officers analyzed the transcripts of each of the interviews, focus groups, writing teams and discussion groups. Summary reports of these analyses and of the data from other sources were considered in the development of the first draft. The data led to developing the standards of practice around five key areas:

- Commitment to Students and Student Learning
- Professional Knowledge
- Teaching Practice
- Leadership and Community
- Ongoing Professional Learning.

Each theme was described as a standard and then elaborated through a listing of key elements. The first draft of the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* document was ready for feedback in July 1998.

The analysis of the sampling of participants in the development and writing phase identified a need to expand the sample and continue the dialogue with members of the College and the public. Some considerations were to:

- increase the sample base of classroom teachers;
- increase the sample base of students;
- increase the sample base of public and parents;
- increase the sample base in Northwestern Ontario; and
- continue to build quality research procedures into the standards development process.

Developmental feedback sessions were conducted from June 19 to September 1, 1998, in 19 different sites throughout Ontario, with College members in a variety of educational roles and areas of expertise. Also included were some public sessions, for example, the Town Council and community representatives in Fort Frances in Northwestern Ontario. Two sessions, one in English and one in French, were held with groups of secondary school students from across the province. The Standards of Practice and Education Committee members worked with unit staff in identifying sample participants. The analysis revealed a large number of classroom teacher and student participants, more specifically, 59% classroom teachers and 17% students. In addition, the Northern Ontario sample was extended to include Northwestern Ontario participants. The sessions' structured format, a presentation and a workshop, facilitated the collection of data.

The preliminary draft was reviewed by more than 600 members of the College and the public who engaged in the structured developmental feedback sessions. These feedback sessions yielded written responses prepared by individual participants and groups of participants. Many professional and public groups and individuals, including those who participated in the

first phase of development, also prepared written responses to this early draft. Data from the developmental feedback sessions and the issues brought forward in these responses provided the basis for the revision of the preliminary draft.

Throughout these first phases of the development of the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*, the responses of participants in the process have been highly personalized, deeply reflective, and complex. Participants in the early focus groups as in the later developmental feedback sessions spoke passionately about the importance of teaching - for now and for a future we can not yet envision.

At the time of writing, the revised document, or second draft, is about to be presented to Governing Council of the College for consideration. The Standards of Practice and Education Committee has proposed that the document be published in the context of a formal validation process. It is anticipated that the document will be distributed to all 171,500 members with a two-page response sheet. Formal validation activities will include case study reporting of implementation activities as they are undertaken by school boards, professional learning program providers and professional associations.

Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession, October 1998

The following five statements comprise the standards of practice for the teaching profession. The key elements expand on these statements.

Commitment to Students and Student Learning

Teachers demonstrate care for and commitment to students. They are dedicated to engaging and supporting student learning. Teachers treat students equitably and with respect. They encourage students to grow as individuals and as contributing members of society. Teachers assist students to become life-long learners.

Key Elements:

1. Demonstration of care and commitment

Teachers:

(a) use the curriculum and available resources to support students in their learning;

(b) model for students the curiosity, enthusiasm and joy of learning;

(c) help students appreciate their own identity, to learn more of their cultural heritage, and to build self-esteem;

(d) demonstrate concern for student character, peer relationships, and personal aspirations; and

(e) reinforce the rights and responsibilities students have as citizens.

2. Support for student learning

Teachers:

(a) understand and use a range of teaching methods to address learning, cultural, spiritual, and language differences, and family situations;

(b) develop programs for students that incorporate a knowledge and understanding of human development and learning theory; and

(c) use a variety of available resources to support curriculum expectations.

3. Equitable and respectful treatment

Teachers:

(a) accommodate the differences in students and respect their diversity;

(b) help students to connect learning to their own life experiences and spiritual and cultural understandings; and

(c) provide a range of ways for students to demonstrate aptitudes, abilities and learning.

4. Growing as individuals and as contributing members of society

Teachers:

(a) encourage students to become active, inquisitive and discerning citizens;

(b) create opportunities for students to understand, facilitate and respond to change; and

(c) engage students in activities that encourage diverse approaches and solutions but also reinforce the social responsibilities students have as citizens.

5. Assistance in becoming life-long learners

Teachers:

(a) link the curriculum and learning experiences to everyday life;

(b) encourage students to know about, reflect on and monitor their own learning; and

(c) assist students to develop and use ways to access and critically assess information.

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Professional knowledge is the foundation for teaching practice. Teachers know the curriculum, the subject matter, the student, and teaching practice. They know education-related legislation, methods for communication, and ways to teach in a changing world.

Key Elements:

1. Knowledge of the student

Teachers know:

(a) how differences arising from cultural heritage, language, family, gender, community and other factors shape experience and impact on learning;

(b) how to recognize strengths and weaknesses of students;

(c) how teaching is shaped by what is known about human development and learning; and

(d) that teaching students with exceptionalities requires the use of specialized knowledge and skills.

2. Knowledge of the curriculum

Teachers know:

(a) the subject matter;

(b) how knowledge in their subject area is created, linked to other subjects and applied to life experiences;

(c) the curriculum relevant to their subject(s); and

(d) ways to connect curriculum expectations to curriculum resources and technologies.

3. Knowledge of teaching practice

Teachers know ways to:

(a) make knowledge and skills accessible to others;

(b) shape instruction so that it is helpful to students who learn in a variety of ways;

(c) motivate students;

(d) establish and modify instructional settings;

(e) manage time for instruction;

(f) establish classroom management strategies that support learning and respect the dignity of students;

(g) collaborate and structure interaction among students to ensure that shared learning, as well as individual learning, occurs;

(h) assess and evaluate student learning, student approaches to learning and the achievement of curriculum expectations; and

(i) communicate and collaborate with parents and others involved in the education of students.

4. Knowledge of the learning environment

Teachers know ways to identify and respond to:

(a) the factors in a diverse and changing society that impact on instruction;

(b) provincial legislation, local policies and procedures, and community norms that guide the decisions they make; and

(c) change as they engage in the change process.

TEACHING PRACTICE

Teachers apply professional knowledge and understanding of the student, curriculum, teaching and the changing context of the learning environment to promote student learning. They conduct ongoing assessment and evaluation of student progress. Teachers modify and refine teaching practice through continuous reflection.

Key Elements:

1. The student

Teachers planning for instruction:

(a) apply knowledge of student backgrounds, experiences and learning styles;

(b) apply knowledge of how students develop and learn;

(c) apply knowledge of a student's physical, social and cognitive development;

(d) respond to learning exceptionalities and special needs;

(e) adapt teaching practice based on student achievement; and

(f) collaborate with professional colleagues to benefit student learning.

2. Curriculum

Teachers:

(a) adapt the methods of inquiry, content knowledge and skills required in the curriculum;

(b) link content and skills to everyday life experiences; and

(c) integrate a variety of teaching and learning strategies, activities and resources.

3. Teaching and the changing context of the learning environment

Teachers:

(a) carry out their duties as outlined in legislation;

(b) establish a safe and supportive learning environment;

(c) establish and maintain standards for student behaviour;

(d) enhance the learning environment with a variety of curriculum resources and available technologies;

(e) organize time and space to enrich the learning environment;

(f) develop student activities to promote social and group responsibilities;

(g) use classroom management skills to enhance learning; and

(h) apply teaching strategies to meet student needs.

4. Assessment and evaluation of students

Teachers:

(a) communicate clear, challenging and achievable expectations for students;

(b) gather data on student performance using a variety of assessment strategies;

(c) keep a continuous and comprehensive record of group and individual achievement; and

(d) report and provide ongoing feedback of individual achievement to students and parents.

5. Reflection

Teachers:

(a) integrate curriculum expectations into current teaching practice;

(b) reflect on current practice to determine if needs of individuals and groups of students are being met; and

(c) modify and refine teaching practice using a variety of sources and resources.

Leadership and Community

Teachers are educational leaders who create and sustain learning communities in their classrooms, in their schools, and in their profession. They collaborate with their colleagues and other professionals, with parents, and with other members of the community to enhance school programs and student learning.

Key Elements:

1. Responsibility and service

Teachers:

(a) acknowledge the responsibility of their position;

(b) build trust with students, parents and the community; and

(c) exercise professional integrity and judgement.

2. Creation of a learning community

Teachers:

(a) learn with and from their students, colleagues and others in communities of learners;

(b) motivate and inspire through sharing their vision;

(c) create opportunities for students to share their learning with their classmates, schoolmates, parents and the community; and

(d) reach out to parents and to diverse local communities inviting them to share their knowledge and skills in supporting classroom and school activities.

3. Sustaining learning through innovation and change

Teachers:

(a) innovate and effect change through decision-making, initiating change, and evaluating and communicating results;

(b) engage others through shared problem-solving and conflict resolution;

(c) act both as team members and as team leaders; and

(d) acknowledge and celebrate effort and success.

ONGOING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Teachers are learners who acknowledge the interdependence of teacher learning and student learning. Teachers engage in a continuum of professional growth to improve their practice.

Key Elements:

1. Teacher learning and student learning

Teachers:

(a) understand that teacher learning is directly related to student learning;

(b) act as role models who demonstrate lifelong learning; and

(c) engage in a variety of learning opportunities both individual and collaborative that are integrated into practice for the benefit of student learning.

2. Professional growth

Teachers:

(a) recognize that continuous professional growth is an integral part of teaching;

(b) recognize that teaching and professional growth are influenced by personal, social and educational contexts;

(c) understand that teaching practice is enhanced by many forms of knowledge, ways of knowing and ways to access that knowledge; and

(d) anticipate and plan the kinds of learning they will need to respond to a variety of educational contexts.

3. Improving practice

Teachers:

(a) demonstrate a commitment to continued professional growth;

(b) know that professional learning is most effective when it is job-embedded, relevant and supported by others within the educational community;

(c) reflect on their practice and learn from experience;

(d) draw on and contribute, where appropriate, to various forms of educational research to improve their practice; and

(e) collaborate with colleagues to enhance student learning.

Ethical Standards

The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* document does not include ethical standards. The College is developing ethical standards as a separate project. The ethical standards will articulate the integrity and responsibility inherent in the relationships identified in the standards of practice: relationships to learners, colleagues, employers, parents, the public, and to the profession.

Implementation

Professional Learning Framework

Professional learning is at the core of teacher professionalism. The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* will provide the foundation for ongoing professional learning. By linking professional standards and professional learning, a long-term agenda for learning emerges. Standards-based professional learning places the locus of control with the teaching profession. It is teacher driven. It offers both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. The content may vary. The way teachers engage in professional learning may vary. The sources and resources for learning

may vary. The constant will be that professional learning is directly linked to the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*.

The purpose of a professional learning framework is to provide a context of priority and coherence within which teachers individually may establish their own professional learning plans and collectively ensure that standards of practice for the teaching profession are supported.

While there has been a constant level of activity on the part of teachers in the area of lifelong learning, this activity has taken place for the most part without a framework or integrated context. Teachers, often working together, have developed personal professional education plans with their colleagues and supervisors, sometimes within a local board framework and sometimes with reference to provincially announced initiatives. Teachers also work independently towards the same goals. There has been no central point from which a career-long vision of ongoing learning for all members of the teaching profession has been envisioned or organized.

A professional learning framework describes contexts or opportunities for ongoing, integrated professional learning. It outlines ways for members of the College to ensure that they are able to maintain the standards of practice for the profession. Continuing professional learning leads to high quality achievements in education for both teachers and students. These, and other issues, are currently under discussion in consultations across the province.

Ongoing Professional Learning

The professional learning framework will include many examples of professional learning activities in addition to certification programs, such as those for principals and superintendents, and additional qualifications programs, such as Special Education. Action research was identified as one example of teacher-directed, school-based, professional learning. The College was particularly interested in how action research might support the standards of practice. How might teachers use action research to integrate the standards into their practice? The research network consisted of pre-service teacher candidates, elementary and secondary teachers, education faculty, superintendents, principals, and consultants. Five groups were initially selected to accommodate a range of experience, diversity of role and demographics. Information was gathered through focus groups, discussion groups and writing teams. In Ontario, action research is being implemented by individuals and groups of educators at the pre-service and in-service levels, within graduate school programs and within collaborative school-based initiatives. From this field-based research inquiry came a strong sense of action research as professional growth, benefiting not only student learning but also teacher learning.

When asked, for example, about how action research supported the standard of "Commitment to Students and Student Learning", participants responded in the following ways:

- *reflection is the idea of being committed to teaching all children;*
- *commitment to student learning is fundamental in action research;*
- *action research is very practical…looking directly at student learning;*
- *dealing with real issues, real students, not just theory;*
- *action research is based on student feedback, reflecting, revising;*

- *direct relationship between student learning and action research: it is creative, divergent, a personal response to each student;*
- *action research invites risk taking, making mistakes...a powerful concept for student learning; and*
- *action research shifts the old paradigm of teaching to a new one of teacher as learner.*

From conversations like these it can be seen that action research has the potential to contribute to the enhancement of both student learning and a sense of teacher professionalism.

Accreditation

The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* is the foundation for the accreditation of pre-service programs. Using the standards of practice document, indicators will be developed to set the expectations for the pre-service program. A variety of sources and resources will be used, for example, earlier focus group research data, national and international reviews, as well as new case studies. The task requires a clear image of the standards of practice for the teaching profession, and images of the pre-service teacher-candidate, of the current pre-service curriculum and program, of new curriculum and of the present and future classroom and school environments. The Accreditation Committee and Subcommittees will work with members of the College and the public through a consultation process that is currently being designed. The purpose of the consultation process is not only to obtain valuable feedback to inform the development of the indicators but also to encourage dialogue about excellence in pre-service education.

The pre-service study of the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* will lead to the development of indicators for the cyclical accreditation process which has been designed to facilitate the continuous improvement of pre-service teacher education programs.

Standards of Practice in Investigations and Hearings

The Ontario College of Teachers is responsible for the discipline of its members. The College investigates complaints and conducts hearings relating to allegations of professional misconduct, incompetence and fitness to practice. Regulation 437/97 made under the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*, includes as professional misconduct: "Failing to maintain the standards of the profession." For the purposes of discipline, the "standards of the profession" can also extend to ethical standards, legislated duties of teachers or community standards applicable to teachers. The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* should be of only minimal assistance to the Discipline Committee in cases under investigation. The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* has been carefully worded as descriptors of practice in language that should not lend itself to prosecution in cases of alleged incompetence.

Current Validation Strategies

Validation strategies are now being planned by staff in partnership with school boards, staff development consortia, faculties, teacher federations, principals and groups of teacher-researchers to work with the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*. It is necessary to understand how the standards relate to the work of educators in different roles. The College wants to see if educators can see images of themselves within the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*. Can educators use the Standards of practice as a foundation for their professional learning?

Some of the validation activities constitute validation through implementation workshops. One such example involved representatives of all the providers of teacher education programs in the

French language in Ontario. Participants represented faculties of education, the educational television network, regional teacher centres, professional development consortia, boards of education, the Ministry of Education and Training, and the teacher federations. The exercise involved examining one of the programs offered through the lens of the key elements of one of the standards of practice. The following is a report on that workshop.

The participants were able to begin the task without asking for any clarification. While most participants began the task as described, the group at one table decided on a different task. The previous agenda item for the group had been a presentation on the development of French language skills among students whose mother tongue or home language is a language other than French. Members of the group in question were all associated with regional teacher centres and used this opportunity to discuss the planning of the teacher in-service program that they would have to develop for the implementation of this new curriculum initiative.

In the debriefing that followed, many very positive comments were made. One participant said that this document formalizes what their organization is trying to do. It provides a good yardstick to assess their programs. Not only does it legitimize their work but it also provides a guide for the development of new programs.

One of the superintendents stated that the document would be most helpful in planning their staff development activities. The group that used the document as a planning tool reported that the document is very easy to use in this way and that it made them think more broadly in terms of the focus of the program they were planning.

A university representative stated that the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession document will be easy to use and helpful in the development and improvement of Additional Qualifications courses.

One of the federation representatives stated that programs based on this document would support the directions in professional learning encouraged by their federation. His example of a program for the purposes of the exercise was a two-week program of teacher knowledge and skill exchange that took place in Burkina-Faso, Central Africa, last summer.

The participants tended to identify Professional Knowledge, Teaching Practice and Commitment to Students and Student Learning as most prominent in their programs.

Another example of a validation project involves a large urban board of education and College resource staff designing and implementing a new staff development program that will be based on the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* document. In this board's program the needs of new teachers and new administrators will be targeted. During this pilot project the College will be able to determine how the standards can be integrated into the classroom practices of teachers and staff developers. Will teachers embrace the notion of a continuum of professional growth based on the standards? The College anticipates receiving a range of feedback on the document that will move the standards to further stages of revision.

In another school board, a case study will focus on a group of program consultants and administrators who have volunteered to systematically track their understanding and "living out "of the standards over a five month period through reflective practices such as journal writing. The staff researcher will conduct discussion groups, interviews and e-mail correspondence with the participants to gain their perspectives and experience.

CONCLUSION

The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* document is being favourably received by both members of the College and by representatives of the public. Teachers are looking for a strong statement from the Ontario College of Teachers that will counter the often-negative media image and public perception of the profession. Publication and widespread distribution of the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* document should provide this much-needed affirmation. Hopefully, this will incite new and renewed professionalism both in the public perception of the teaching profession and in the professional practice of members of the Ontario College of Teachers.

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